

# The Stabilizing and Strengthening Power of the Word of God

*Easter*

By Ty Blackburn

**Bible Text:** Luke 24:13-35  
**Preached on:** Sunday, March 31, 2024

**Providence Church**  
2146 Buford Hwy  
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

Turn with me to the 24th chapter of Luke, Luke's gospel, chapter 24. We're going to pick up from where James read earlier in the service up to verse 12, the account of the resurrection. We're going to look at verses 13 to 35, the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and their encounter with the risen Christ. This is one of 11 distinct post-resurrection appearances recorded in Scripture. Over the 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and his bodily ascension, he appeared to his disciples a number of different times, 11 of those are recorded on the pages of Scripture. This one is one, the more familiar and more amazing. In fact, it's really astounding when you get to the theological point of this appearance because really what it's going to tell us, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the linchpin of the Christian faith. The Scripture makes this clear in so many places. If Christ is not risen, you are still in your sins, our hope is vain, 1 Corinthians 15. The resurrection of Christ is vital. It's what certifies the perfection of his work. The cross is the great saving work of God in Christ, and the resurrection is the certification of that. As we read earlier, the cross actually accomplished everything for our salvation. When Jesus died, at the moment he died, the text we read earlier reminded us that the veil in the temple was torn in two. Jesus on the cross said, "It is finished." Another account tells us that particular last saying of Jesus, "It is finished. Into Your hands I commit My spirit," he said, and the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The veil in the temple was that which separated the Holy of Holies, where the glory of God dwelt in the temple from the outer courts of the temple, where the priests could go. And so only once a year could one man enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, the high priest, after making sacrifices for himself and sacrifices for the people. One day a year, he could go behind that veil into the very presence of God and so when Christ died, having become an offering for sin, bearing our sins in his body on the cross, he satisfied the just demands of God, and everyone who believes in him, by the veil being torn, says the way is open into the presence of God. Jesus has done it all. Jesus has paid it all. The victory is won. But the resurrection certifies the reality of that victory when on Sunday, the lifeless body of the Lord Jesus lying in the tomb suddenly was energized with resurrection life, and his heart began to beat, his blood began to make its way through his veins, air filled his lungs. He's alive. And then 40 days later, when he ascended to heaven, he went back no longer merely as God, as he had left heaven, always the eternal Son of God. He now goes back to heaven, the eternal Son of God, now also man and so that, as someone has

remarked, the dust of the earth now sits enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high. A human heart beats at the right hand of God Almighty.

The resurrection is the victory and so the glory of the resurrection is something that we celebrate. Everything hinges on that because it certifies the work of the cross. And we come to this passage this morning, Luke 24, verses 13 to 35, the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and it hit me with new clarity, the wonder of what this passage is saying. This is a resurrection appearance of the Lord Jesus to two disciples who were very discouraged, were downcast, were emotionally driven to the point of great concern and anxiety, fear, anguish, and the Lord comes to them to give them great comfort that everything they believe is true. And what I want you to notice is this, this is the big point of this passage, that Jesus does not first reveal himself to them. Now realize they're perplexed, they're discouraged, they're wondering, "Has everything we hoped to be true, has it fallen apart?" They were misinterpreting what had happened in the cross. They thought Jesus had come to be hailed as King to usher in the earthly kingdom of God and so when he dies, they believe everything, all their hopes have been dashed, and Jesus is coming to help them understand that everything's right on track and to strengthen their faltering faith. But what's astounding is how he goes about it. He veils who he is. Supernaturally, we're going to read the text in a moment, supernaturally, they're prevented from recognizing him.

Now think about if you were them, if you were faltering in your faith, if you were wondering if everything that you had believed made sense, had it all just crumble before your eyes and you could have the opportunity to see Jesus with your own eyes, the risen Christ. Can you imagine anything more wonderful, more faith-sustaining and faith-strengthening than seeing Jesus with your own two eyes? This passage says there's something even more faith strengthening than that because Jesus doesn't let them see who he is so that he can expound the Scriptures to them. He veils their understanding of who he is, because he knows that would provide a measure of comfort, but he has something even more wonderful for them than seeing him. They're going to see him, and they're going to go back and report to the other disciples. Their eyes are going to be opened as we're going to see in a moment, when he breaks bread, and they're going to see and understand that's Jesus, he's alive, and they're going to go back and say Jesus is alive, but Jesus delays their understanding of that so that he can walk them through what must have been the most glorious Bible study that has ever happened in the history of mankind. The road to Emmaus is about seven miles, the text tells us. It takes a couple of hours for the average person to walk seven miles. They're starting off on a walk, and Jesus joins them, and Jesus begins after a moment to expound the Scriptures, and so what I want you to see, the title of the message is, "The Stabilizing and Strengthening Power of the Word of God." The risen Christ takes time to speak a message from the Scriptures, because this is what they need more than they need anything else, is to understand the word of God.

There's something wonderful about that. You know, before we read the text, Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Remember that? Jesus tells a parable about a rich man and a man named Lazarus, a beggar, who used to beg at the rich man's gate. I mean, the rich man, Lazarus begged at the rich man's gate. And the rich man ignored Lazarus,

never did anything for him. They both died, Jesus says, and they're both in the place of the dead. Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham, experiencing comfort and blessedness. The rich man is in a place of torment, preparation for what hell will be, separated from the presence of God, and yet, in the place of the dead, he can see Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and he calls out across the divide to Abraham and says, "Father Abraham, would you please have Lazarus dip his finger in water and come and drop a drop on my tongue because I'm perishing in this heat?" Abraham says, "There's a great chasm fixed between us. We cannot come to where you are. You cannot come to where we are." So the man realizes there's no hope for his suffering to be alleviated and so he calls back to Abraham and he says this, "Would you then tell Lazarus to go to my brothers and to tell them about this place so that they will be saved from it?" You know what Jesus says? He says, "If they have the law and the prophets, and they don't listen to them, neither will they listen if a man rises from the dead." The word of God, the life-giving power of the word of God. God has ordained it. The means that he uses to save souls, the means that he uses to strengthen faith is the word of God. That's why Jesus said, when he was tempted, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." This is what we see unfold in this passage. Let's begin reading at verse 13.

13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. 17 And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" 19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. 21 "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 "But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." 25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. 28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is

getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we ask now that You might break the bread of Your word for us, that You might feed us on Your life-giving truth, that You might strengthen faltering faith, that You might open the eyes of those who are unbelieving and show them the glory of Christ and call them to Yourself. We pray that You might call all of us to the worship of so great a Savior. We pray in His name. Amen.*

The stabilizing and strengthening power of the word of God. Three points this morning. The first point is the weakness and instability of faith in perplexing circumstances. It's kind of a long point there, the weakness and instability of faith in perplexing circumstances. These are two true disciples, two believers, and yet they are faltering in their faith in a pretty fundamental way, not falling away, but they're really struggling. In fact, the way they're described, it's clear that emotionally they're under great distress. Verse 17 makes this explicit when Jesus asked them, "'What are the words you're exchanging with one another as you're walking?' And they stood still looking sad." Their faces downcast, their hearts are broken. But when you look at the way he describes from verses 13 to 17, their journey and their manner, it's instructive. There's a lot of emphasis on the movement. They're walking, they're talking. In fact, the way he describes in verse 14, they're talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. Verse 15, they were talking and discussing. Jesus himself approached and began traveling with them. See the emphasis, they're talking, they're talking, they're discussing. In fact, the word discussing there in verse 15 is a word which means actually seeking together. It's not just that they're talking, he's using various synonyms and this word means they're having a discussion in which they're seeking earnestly after something. They're trying to make sense out of all that has happened. They're perplexed. And then when he says to them in verse 16, I mean verse 17, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another?" I'm reading the New American Standard. "What's the point? What's this conversation you're having," the ESV says, but this translated "exchanging with one another" is a strong language for conversation. It literally means to throw against. The conversation is they're bantering back and forth. I mean, they're not at odds with each other, except that they're so perplexed that their conversation is very animated, is the idea. And Jesus even asked them, "Why is your conversation as it were so animated? What are you talking about?"

I love the fact, listen, isn't it amazing that Jesus asked the questions that he asked? I mean, it's stunning to me. He needs to ask nothing. He knows all and yet he asks questions. "Hey, what are you talking about?" And so they, and I love the motion, they're walking, they're on this journey. It's all about movement, movement, movement, all the way through verse 17. Even when he says, what are these things you're exchanging with one another as you are walking, it's Greek, present, along with imperfect tense verbs everywhere, which mean continuous, continuous, continuous action. There's motion, they're moving. The conversation is animated, it's going. Jesus asked this question and they stood still. They stop. His question's so stunning, they can't believe that he's asking this question and yet then in that moment, the animated conversation, you see deep, profound sadness and despondency of heart evident in their countenance.

So Jesus, by asking that first question, gets them to look at their hearts and then one of them, a man named Cleopas, we don't know the other guy is named. A lot of speculation about it. Some people even think Luke was the other disciple. I don't necessarily think that myself. The Lord didn't tell us, doesn't really matter. He says, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem? I mean, everybody that is in town knows about Jesus of Nazareth and what has happened. How can you be here?" I mean, they're walking from Jerusalem out of town so he knows this traveler, this man that he's been prevented from understanding, Cleopas, as he looks at him, "You come just from Jerusalem. How could you possibly not know about Jesus of Nazareth and the things which have happened in these days?" And I love it, Jesus says to him another question, "What things?" I'm telling you, my instinct, if I were Jesus, I would have just been already launched into my message. I would not have asked the questions to draw them out. The wisdom of Christ, he wants them to tell him what is on their heart. This is the tenderness of God. God is a God who asks questions. Think about back in Genesis 3 when man sinned. What's the first thing God does? God comes, man's hiding, what does the Lord say? He asks a question, "Where are you, Adam?" He does not need to know. It's not that Adam could hide behind a tree and be outside the sight of God. The Spirit of the Lord is in every place, beholding the evil and the good. God sees behind that tree as well as he sees in front of that tree. "Where are you, Adam?" He asked the question because Adam needed to answer the question, "Hey, where am I?"

So he says, "What things," in verse 19. "And they said to Him, 'The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He.'" Their faith is really faltering. We were hoping, past tense. As if they're saying, "We had hoped." I think there's genuine faith there, but it's really shaken to the core in this moment. They don't understand.

And why are they so perplexed? It's about these things. In fact, the word "these things" is a key word in the passage. Seven different times it's "these things, these things, these things." Verse 14, they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. Verse 18, when he says, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" Jesus says, "What

things," verse 19, and they say, "The things about Jesus." Four times right there, and then later, they say, in verse 21, "we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened." What are the things? It's the things that are the problem for them. The reason their faith is shaken to the core is the things that they're talking about that Jesus wants to get to the bottom of. What are the things that have shaken them to the core? It's the sufferings of Christ. It was something completely unanticipated by them. They knew he was the King and the fact that he suffered and was crucified, they cannot comprehend it and so their faith has been shaken deeply.

The sufferings of Christ, they didn't have a category through which to interpret that. When it happened, they had no ability to fit it into their theology. You know, life is like that. Life is like that in the Christian life. Things happen, particularly suffering, and it shakes us to the core. It causes us to be perplexed and despondent and discouraged and to begin to doubt the things that we had hitherto been so certain of. And so these two men, their faith is faltering. They need to know that everything's on track, that God's plan is on track, even though the circumstances seem to argue against it from their own human reason, their understanding. This is the problem, we interpret, we're made to be interpreters. Human beings are interpreters. We see things happen and we try to understand them. You know, you see this in little children. They're figuring out the world. They're basically little detectives, little interpreters trying to make sense out of life and we continue that our whole lives. We try to make order and structure. God has made us like himself. We reason, we think, we try to put things together and what he's saying is our faith, as we understand the things of God, we put things together, we have a system for understanding life, and then something happens that upsets everything, shakes the apple cart to the point where we don't know that we know anything about what we're looking at. We can't make sense of it. This is what has happened to these two disciples.

The weakness and instability of faith in the face of perplexing circumstances. First encouragement is this is normal. If you're there right now, you're not in a surprising place. You're in a normal place, that God does great things in this circumstance. When you find yourself shaken deeply, it's a time of great opportunity because God gets you asking questions, and he helps you to ask the right questions. That's what we see with these two disciples, the weakness and instability of faith in the face of perplexing circumstances. Secondly, second point this morning is the remedy for faltering faith. The remedy for faltering faith. You know, they said they were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel, but they're thinking he must not be going to be because he died and then they even recount the resurrection account. They recount what we read earlier, that the women who went to the tomb came back reporting that Jesus had risen, and that some of the disciples went and they said found the tomb exactly as the women had said, that is empty, with the grave clothes there, But it's instructive. The last thing they say in verse 24, some of those who were with us went to the tomb, found it just exactly as the women also had said, "but Him they did not see." They didn't see Jesus. And so they're not sure. They haven't seen Jesus.

They want to see Jesus, so they know that he has risen from the dead but isn't it interesting that Jesus veils them from understanding they are talking to the risen Christ right at this moment? Isn't that amazing? I mean, one of the things that shows you is God is willing to... he's patient and he's willing to wait on the process to work out for the fullest and deepest and richest benefit to the souls of his people. I mean, it'd be hard. Can you imagine you have that news and you're supposed to hold it? You just know about the resurrection and God says, "Don't tell them right now." I've got really good news. I can't tell you. The Lord said I can't tell you. God has this news. Christ is right there in front of them, but they're veiled because the Lord wants to take time to walk them through a study, a careful study of the Scripture while their hearts are in the perplexity of the moment because if he showed himself to them, he could say, "Okay, I'm the risen Christ. Sit down. I'm going to give you guys a Bible study." He could have done it that way but they wouldn't have been asking with the same earnestness and brokenness, their hearts wouldn't have been stirred up quite the way that it is. When you're in perplexity, it is a ripe time for the word of God. I mean, it is the moment for the heart to be sown with the Scripture.

The remedy for faltering faith is not a miraculous sign. People are always wanting signs. They wanted signs in Jesus. I mean, it's so amazing. He's doing miracles all over the place, and they come up and ask him for a sign. Whenever they do that, he doesn't give them anything because that is unbelief masking itself as spiritual interest. And it's also wrong-headed. It's not about the signs outwardly, you know, physical, sensational events, it's about the heart, it's about inward issues. Our biggest problem is not what's going to happen to our bodies, because I've got news for all of us, we're all going to die, unless Jesus comes back first, but what is eternal is the soul of man, and what we must have is life, eternal life within.

And so Jesus then takes the time to give this wonderful Bible study. He says in verse 25, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe." Their problem is they're foolish. They just don't know. That's our problem. We're foolish. We're ignorant. We don't know. We think we know, but we don't. Slow of heart. I mentioned earlier the emphasis on the motion and the action. They're moving, they're walking, they're talking, they're arguing, they're discussing, and yet in reality all that outward external emotion and action is masking a heart that is slow, slow, slow to believe. Sometimes the outward and energy that we have is not what we need. We need to have open hearts and God to work in our hearts.

He says, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" He said, "You have the prophets. You have enough to know already what is happening." I love this. You know, we know that God has to open our eyes, yes we do, but Jesus is consistently indignant about people's unbelief and if Jesus is indignant about people's unbelief, we ought to be indignant about our own unbelief. It's not that we need God to be more clear, it's that God has been so clear, the problem is with our dullness, our unwillingness to believe. The problem is in here. God's making himself known everywhere. I mean, he's making himself known in nature. Everything testifies to the glory of God, the majesty of the universe, the distance and vastness of the universe, the tiny, smallest sail, the complexity of it. All of this testifies to God. "Day after day, they

pour forth speech. Night after night, they utter knowledge," Psalm 19. And then you have the Scriptures, which speak perfectly. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.

The word of God is so clear, so beautiful and so Jesus, when he encounters Nicodemus, remember Nicodemus, the Pharisee, the teacher of Israel? And Jesus says to him, "You must be born again." And Nicodemus is like, "What do You mean I must be born again? I can't go back into my mother's womb and be born." Jesus is like, "Man, you are just ignorant." He didn't say it that way, but that's what he... you know, "You're the teacher of Israel and you don't understand these things." He's saying, "Nicodemus, if you just carefully read your Bible, you would know this." Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He did carefully read his Bible, but not with a heart of submission and faith and so he missed what was plain right before him. You've been reading the Bible, if you've been reading the Bible rightly, you know the whole Old Testament's been saying that sinners must have a new heart. That's the only way you can be saved. God has to do heart surgery on you. You have to be born again.

So he says that to Nicodemus, and he's saying the same thing to these guys, and he's going to say the same thing to the other apostles when he meets them later that same day. This is Sunday afternoon, basically. It's a Sunday afternoon walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and he says, "How could you not understand this? The prophets have spoken with such clarity." Verse 27, "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." I love this phrase, explained. The word "explained" is a compound word. It's actually a word interpreted. Some translations say that. He interpreted to them the Scriptures. Hermeneuo. We get hermeneutics from that. Hermeneuo means to interpret. But it's dihermeneuo. It's an intensified form of the word, which means to interpret all the way through. Preposition di means through. All the way through, interpreting to the point of absolute clarity. He lays open the Scriptures with absolute clarity. That is what a faltering, stumbling believer needs. They need the Scriptures made plain and clear more than they need a miracle. You and I think we need a miracle. God says you need the word. Stop talking about all these miracles. The miracle is that you are changed on the inside, not on the outside. And what changes on the inside is the word of the living God. The remedy for faltering faith is the word of God clearly interpreted, rightly understood. How much we need the word. It truly is. We need it more than we need our food.

The third point, we've seen the weakness and instability of faith in perplexing circumstances, the remedy for faltering faith, the word of God, and the third point is the perfection and beauty of Scripture. This Bible study, I wish that, you know, he had recorded it. Obviously, he chose not to, you know, and the Lord has his purposes in that. He could have made it so that technology was available at that time to make a podcast of Jesus' Bible study so you and I could listen to it. I mean, it's not like God thinks, "If I just had timed this better, I just had waited till they had that technology." No, he has a purpose in that. His timing is perfect and so he doesn't tell us all of it. He invites us to do the same thing ourselves. He basically says, "Okay, to you who love Me and know Me, is it not obvious that the Christ had to suffer?" And he calls them to look at the Scriptures and he opens the Scriptures with them, reminds them. I'm sure he wasn't carrying all the



different scrolls. He just tells them from memory verses of the Bible and explains to them what it means.

But the question was, "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things," verse 26. Was it not absolutely required for the Christ to suffer these things? You guys are all perplexed because suffering is happening and you're like, "Why is the Christ suffering?" This shouldn't happen. And he's like, if you read your Bible, you would know it had to happen. There was no other way. It's what the Scriptures have been saying the whole way. And I love this, the beauty of the word of God, the perfection and beauty of Scripture, that it's amazing, it's astounding. The Bible, we believe, is written by at least 40 different human authors. You know, the Koran written by one, and monkeyed around by people after that. The Bible, 40 different human authors, over a period of 1,500 years. Think about that. A book that somebody started and then they finished 1,500 years later. 1400 BC to sometime late first century AD, 100 AD at the outside. 1,500 years, 40 different authors, people from all kinds of literary backgrounds, social backgrounds, Three different continents, some of the Scripture was written, most of it was written in Asia, Israel and around that. Some was written in Europe, some was written in Africa. Three different languages, two primarily Old Testament Hebrew, New Testament Greek, but there's Aramaic in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament. Three languages, 40 authors, 1,500 years, authors with all kinds of literary stylistic differences. In fact, Luke is one of the best New Testament writers in the way he handles the Greek language. Commentators often talk about that. Luke, his skill in the Greek language. Not so much Peter. What's up with that? The style and the artistry, you see the human being in the book, and yet these 40 different people, and from diverse backgrounds, you've got people like Luke, who was a physician, people like Peter, who was a fisherman, people like Amos, who was a farmer, Moses, you know, raised in the courts of Pharaoh, Matthew, a tax collector, various and sundry types of backgrounds, different styles, and yet one unified message. How can that be? Because it is the word of God. All Scripture is God-breathed, breathed out by God. What they wrote on the page in the autographs was what God willed them to write.

And so from Genesis to Revelation, you have one unified story, and it is a glorious portrait and Jesus invites them to go back with him through the pages of the Old Testament and to show them this thing they were lacking. They didn't understand it was necessary for the Christ to suffer these things. And I think I want us to walk through that. Turn with me back to Genesis. We don't have two hours. We're going to do this in just a few minutes and you keep working on it this week. It was necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory, Jesus says. It had to happen. He had to suffer. They were thinking he came to enter into his glory, and he's taking his people into his glory. No, he had to come and suffer before he could enter into his glory. Why is that? Genesis 3:15 in the curse that God pronounces upon the serpent, he pronounces, this is the proto-euangelion, that is the first gospel, that's what that word means, proto-first, euangelion-gospel. The first preaching of the gospel is in Genesis 3:15, and it's when God pronounces judgment on the serpent. God's talking to the serpent, and in Adam and Eve's hearing, God pronounces judgment on the serpent, and in so doing, preaches the gospel to them. He says this to the serpent, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman,

And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." Salvation is going to come. It's going to be a seed of the woman, which is that staggering in itself. The word here is a word that in Greek is translated sperm, in Hebrew, zera. It means seed. It's that which belongs to the man. The seed of the woman, the woman doesn't have a seed, but in this case, the seed of the woman is coming. It's the virgin birth of Christ being prophesied right there in Genesis 3:15. I think Jewish scholars must have wrestled with this all throughout time until finally they saw what God was doing. But our point is, suffering is necessary for salvation. "He will bruise you on the head, you will bruise him on the heel." The seed to come will crush the head of the serpent and bring deliverance, but he must be bruised in the crushing. You see, there's going to be suffering as a part of the victory.

Well, you follow on through Genesis, chapter 6 to 8, the story of Noah and the ark. The one thing you draw out here is the wrath of God is coming. The wrath of God is coming. To be saved from the wrath of God, you need to be in a covenant relationship with God. Relationship with God is covenant. Salvation is about covenant. Covenant is about a binding relationship between two parties where promises are made from one to the other, reciprocal promises that are inviolable. Genesis 15, the Lord in Genesis 15, Abram, this is before he's Abraham, he's been told to go to the land of Canaan. He's been sojourning there for about 15 years at this point, and he doesn't yet have a child, and he's asking God about that. "You promised me a son," and the Lord says, "Yeah, your descendants are going to be like the stars." Abraham looked at the stars and believed the promise, and Genesis 15:6, "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." This is justification by faith alone. He believed in the promise of God, and God took his faith, and through that faith reckoned righteousness to him.

The beauty of salvation being laid out in the 15th chapter, but what's instructive for our purpose is salvation comes through suffering. The Christ must suffer. The seed of the woman must suffer. Genesis 15, right after this, the Lord promises him that he's going to have the land of Canaan and Abraham says in verse 8, "O Lord God, how may I know that I'll possess it? I mean, I'm having trouble waiting on you to give me a son already, and now you're saying, I'm going to have this land and I'm living as a stranger, as an alien in tents. How will I know that I'm going to possess it?" God says, verse 9, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old female goat and a three-year-old ram and a turtle dove and a pigeon," five animals, "bring them all to Me." And Abraham brought them. He knew what God was saying because he knew that the covenant ceremony, this is a covenant ceremony God wants to have with me. So the Scripture says that he brought those animals, a ox, a goat, a ram, and two birds, and he cut them in half. He cuts that cow into two sides of the animal and separates him. He cuts that goat two sides and separates him. He cuts that ram two sides, separates him. He puts one bird on this side, one bird on that side. And he knows that God has done this because this is a covenant ceremony. This was common in that day, that when two parties enter into a binding relationship, a covenant, they would both agree to be faithful to one another, and they would utter these promises and then walk through the pieces of the animals.

Now, this is pretty gruesome. In fact, it's kind of nasty. Abraham kills the animals. God waits a little while. He has to sit there and drive off the vultures. I mean, they're like, "Hey, there's something to eat here." He runs them off and he waits until evening and he falls into kind of a halfway asleep and he's awake and he's with God but God's veiling him in some way and he hears the Lord make promises but he doesn't make any promises. And he then hears the Lord, he sees the Lord in the form of a fiery oven passing between the pieces. What's supposed to happen is both parties make promises, both parties pass through the pieces, and this is what's happening. When you make a promise and you're saying as you pass through the pieces, "If I don't keep my promise, if I don't keep the covenant, may I be as these animals. May I be accursed." This is the curse that attaches to the covenant. "May the curse of the covenant fall on me."

And so both parties pass through. This is the normal standard way. But in this case, Abram does not pass through the pieces. Abram does not make promises. God makes promises and God passes through the pieces and so what the effect of that is to say this, the Jews as they read this in the days Moses wrote it, they would have understood this is saying that if Abram doesn't keep his covenant, the curse that falls to Abram will fall on God. God is saying by passing through the pieces, "If I don't keep My covenant," which is unthinkable, "let Me be as these pieces." Impossible for God not to keep his covenant. But he's also saying, "Abram, when you don't keep your covenant, let the curse fall on Me," Yahweh himself.

How can that be? How can God be cursed, the one who is blessed forever? This is impossible, this is unthinkable, and yet this is reality. And then continue to walk through Abraham's life. Genesis 22, the story of Abraham offering Isaac. Such a perplexing story. Unbelievers look at that and in their scoffing, they miss the beauty and glory of it. Remember what God says to Abraham? He waits all these years. He's now 101. He's older than that. He's 101 when Isaac's born. Isaac's probably about 12. So he's 113, something like that. God comes to him and says, this is what God says, Genesis 22, "Abraham, take your son, your only son, whom you love, go to the mountain I will show you and offer him as a sacrifice there to Me." I waited all these years for this son. He's the promise. You told me just in the last chapter, of course Abraham wasn't thinking in terms of chapters, but in chapter 21 God had said, God had said, "Through Isaac, your descendants, your seed will be named. I'm going to bless the whole world through you, and it's going to go through Isaac. The Savior is coming through Isaac, the Savior of the world." Told him that in Genesis 21. Then Genesis 22, he says, "You take your son." And think about how, he could have just said, "Take your son and offer him. I know it's even hard to talk about Abraham, but I just want you to do it." No he says, "Take your son, your only son whom you love, and you take him and offer him as a sacrifice to Me."

Why would God do that? The text says he got up early the next morning, saddled his donkey, took two servants with him, and they made their way to Mount Moriah. They get to the place that God has told him to go, leaves the servants there, says, "You guys wait here. The boy and I are going to go over there and worship God and return." I think that's great faith on Abraham's part. He doesn't know what's happening, but he knows through Isaac your descendants will be named. The author of Hebrews tells us Abraham knew

that if God caused him to kill him, if he went on through and killed Isaac, God must be going to raise him from the dead because God's promise will be kept.

So he goes with Isaac, remember? Isaac's carrying wood for the fire. Abraham's carrying fire. He's got the knife. And his son, Isaac, as they're walking, realizes, "We're going to make a sacrifice. We've done this a lot, because I know my dad worships Yahweh, and I'm with him all the time when he does it. And so, hey, Dad, we've got a problem. We don't have an offering." You imagine the heart of Abraham at that moment. He knows what God's told him to do. He's not told his son. He can't tell his son. Not yet. And he says, "The Lord will provide for Himself an offering, son." Faith, holding on to God, trusting in the word of God, trusting the word of God above everything else. When you can trust nothing else, trust the word of God.

And so he walks on with his son, he fixes the altar. He puts the wood on. He lights the fire. And he gets ready now to offer Isaac so that he then can take Isaac after he's killed him and place him on the fire. He raises his knife above Isaac. Isaac is probably bound because he would have to do that. It's not certain. Isaac may have submitted willingly. We don't know. But Abraham raises the knife. He's about to bring it down and God says, "Stop. I wanted to see if you were willing to do that, and because you're willing to do that, I'm going to confirm My covenant." And Abraham sees that there's a ram caught in the thicket. A ram has just gotten tangled up in some briars over there, and he takes the ram, and he offers the ram in his place, and he calls this place Mount Moriah. He calls on the name of the Lord, and he gives God a name. Yahweh Yira, Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide. "In the mountain of the Lord, it will be provided," that's what he says in Genesis 22. In the mountain of the Lord, it will be provided. Abraham, the author of Hebrews says, when he took Isaac, or imagine when he's tying Isaac up, laying him down, Isaac now is dealing with all this. This is like, "What is going on?" Abraham now raising his hand. When God says, don't do it, and he realized that he's not going to have to kill his son, he lays the knife down. He sees the ram caught in the thicket. He understands his son now, he unties his son, he takes him back into his arms and the author of Hebrews says, he received him back as a type. He sees off into the future God would not do something like this without great reason because God overflows with loving kindness and compassion. But our sin is so great. Our sin is such a massive problem that salvation is not cheap. It is not easy. It will cost God everything. He sees as he brings Isaac back that Isaac is a type. He understands God is going to send his Son, his only Son, whom he loves, and he will be offered at Mount Moriah. 2,000 years before, Abraham is on that mountain. 2,000 years later, scholars believe that mountain had a name. It is Golgotha, the place of the skull. Two thousand years later, God took his Son, his only Son, whom he loves, and he offered him for us.

There was no other way for us to be saved and all of the Old Testament continues that refrain, there must be a sacrifice. The curse must fall on someone. The curse of the covenant is going to fall on God himself. He's going to purchase the church with his own blood. And just think about Exodus, the Passover lamb. The blood over the lintel post, the lamb. 1 Corinthians 5:7, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. All of these types of Jesus. Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement. I mentioned that once a year could the priest

go behind the veil into the Holy of Holies. There were two goats that had to be sacrificed for this to happen. The first goat to be sacrificed was sacrificed by driving him away alive. They would confess the sins of the people on the goat, and he was called the scapegoat, and he carried the sins of the people off into the...they drove him outside the camp, away from the presence of God. The second goat, they killed and they offered the blood of the sacrifice. The high priest would take that blood behind the veil on that day and it atoned for the sins of the people. So both of these goats were a picture. How can man be made right with God? How can atonement be made? There must be a sacrifice. And in Jesus, both the scapegoat and the sin offering are fulfilled in the glory of his cross. because he was sacrificed but not in the temple. The author of Hebrews says he was sacrificed outside the camp, separated from the presence of God, bearing our sins, the scapegoat. He is all of that, the fulfillment of all of that.

The Scriptures continue to make this clear. I wish we had more time. I'll just mention this. Look this week at Psalm 22, Psalm 69. And let me ask you this question, why did David have to suffer so much? David's a man after God's heart. David is the king. That's the type of Jesus. Jesus is the son of David. The Messiah is the King in the line of David. The gospels make clear Jesus in the line of David. David is the type. When David was anointed king, he didn't become king. He spent years running for his life. Why? Is it bad planning on God's part? People aren't ready for you. Sorry, I was a little ahead of myself on that one. No, of course not. He is typifying Christ. Before the crown there must be the cross, the suffering. David suffers and suffers and suffers. That's why Psalm 22, he is suffering so much. He writes those things about himself. He writes those things about himself. He says in Psalm 22 verse 1, this is David talking about himself. He says, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day." Those words were uttered by Jesus on the cross as he bore our sins. You see, you read Psalm 22, Psalm 69, it talks about them dividing his clothes. It talks about him being surrounded, given gall to drink. David is saying all these things about his own experience. Why did it happen? Because God was writing it all across the pages of Scripture. There must be suffering. The servant to come, the king to come must suffer.

It's all over the pages of the Bible. That's why Jesus said, "O you foolish and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer like this and then enter into his glory?" It was the only way we could be saved. God does nothing over the top. Our sin's so great that it took his own dear Son being offered. He was willing to do that. He was willing to do everything necessary to save sinners like you and me. Isn't that amazing? And now after suffering, he is exalted. He rose again because death, it was impossible for death to hold him. He was righteous. The sting of sin is death. Well, if you've got no sin, death has no sting. And so he just waited till Sunday till the time was right. He could have walked out on Friday. And so he is King of kings and Lord of lords, and he is a loving, though he's a glorious King and a majestic King that deserves our worship and our submission, he is the most loving and most tender Savior, willing to suffer all that he suffered for you and me. Are you believing in him today? Are you trusting in him? Why not? Trust him today.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the glory of the salvation that You've made known to us in Christ. The more that we see it, the more amazing it becomes, the more wonderful and sweet and beautiful. Lord, have mercy on us. Forgive our unbelief. Forgive our faltering faith. Forgive us for doubting You. Make us strong in the Lord. And for those here today who have not repented and believed, O God, help them run to Christ. You're a God who always says, "Come. Though your sins are as scarlet, I will make them as white as snow." Thank You, Lord Jesus. May You be praised. We pray in Your name. Amen.*